

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 SAJ-01

TRSE-00 FRB-03 CIEP-03 NIC-01 DRC-01 /129 W

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R 231805Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4160

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH AND AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN OFFICIALLY OPENED

REF: A. LONDON 12330, B. LONDON 12291

SUMMARY: "SWEET REASONABLENESS" APPEARED TO BE THE KEY-
NOTE OF THE INITIAL PRESS CONFERENCES OF THE LEADING
PARTIES. LEADERS WERE ATTEMPTING TO AVOID ANY WHIFF OF
UNDUE EMOTIONALISM, POLITICAL SAVAGERY, OR THE LIKE.
WITH EXTENSIVE TOURING, SPEAKING, AND CAMPAIGNING AHEAD
FOR ALL, THIS MAY NOT CONTINUE AS THE TEMPO PICKS UP.
END SUMMARY.

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1. ALL THREE MAJOR PARTIES OFFICIALLY OPENED GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN SEPTEMBER 23 WITH MAJOR PRESS CONFERENCES, AND WILL CONTINUE TO MEET PRESS EACH MORNING FOR BALANCE OF CAMPAIGN. LABOR PARTY AFFAIR, CHAIRED BY PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY RON HAYWARD, HAD PRIME MINISTER WILSON LEADING PANEL OF CABINET SECRETARIES -- DENIS HEALEY (EXCHEQUER), MICHAEL FOOT (EMPLOYMENT) AND SHIRLEY WILLIAMS (CONSUMER PROTECTION). FOOT LED OFF WITH DISCUSSION OF SOCIAL CONTRACT (REFTEL A) AND ADROITLY HANDLED QUESTIONS FROM PRESS. HEALEY FOLLOWED WITH MASTERFUL EXPOSITION OF ECONOMIC SITUATION, (REFTELS A AND B), STRESSING RECENT ECONOMIC INDICATORS WHICH, HE CLAIMED, DEMONSTRATED LABOR GOVERNMENT'S CAPACITY TO MANAGE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES FACING NATION. HE TOO HANDLED QUESTIONS FROM PRESS WITH GREAT SKILL. WILSON WAS ASKED ABOUT LORD CHALFONT'S SEPTEMBER 22 RESIGNATION (SEPTTEL) FROM LABOR PARTY WHICH RECEIVED FRONT PAGE COVERAGE FROM LONDON PRESS THIS MORNING. WILSON OBSERVED THAT UNTIL HE READ PAPERS THIS MORNING, HE HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF CHALFONT'S POLITICAL AFFILIATION AND THAT EVENT WAS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE. WILSON ALSO NOTED CHALFONT WAS NOT MEMBER OF LOCAL LABOR PARTY ORGANIZATION AND THAT HE HAD NOT TAKEN LABOR WHIP IN HOUSE OF LORDS FOR SOME TIME. WILSON'S LOW PROFILE PERFORMANCE WAS SHARP CONTRAST TO FEBRUARY CAMPAIGN AND MAY INDICATE A CHANGE IN HIS ELECTION STRATEGY -- AS ONE MEMBER OF PRESS OBSERVED, HE MAY BE READING THE POLLS WHICH INDICATE HE IS NOT POPULAR WITH VOTERS. IT WAS ALSO EVIDENT THAT LABOR PARTY IS SEEKING TO CREATE IMAGE OF TECHNICAL AND MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE. IF THIS IS TO BE LABOR'S MAIN IMAGE THEME, PERFORMANCES OF HEALY AND FOOT SHOULD PROVE HELPFUL.

2. PARTY LEADER HEATH AND CHAIRMAN WHITELAW OPENED DAILY CONSERVATIVE ELECTION PRESS CONFERENCE BEFORE CROWDED AUDIENCE. HEATH MADE A BRIEF INTRODUCTORY SPEECH IN WHICH HE RE-EMPHASIZED CONSERVATIVE DEDICATION TO CREATION OF NATIONAL UNITY, A NATIONAL CONSENSUS, TO SOLVE THE NATION'S CRITICAL PROBLEMS, WHICH, HE SAID, BOTH LABOR AND THE LIBERALS HAVE REJECTED. IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS THEREAFTER, MOST OF WHICH WERE NOT PARTICU-

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LARLY BARBED, HEATH MADE CLEAR THAT THE PARTY, ALTHOUGH IT SEEKS NATIONAL UNITY, IS AIMING AT ACHIEVING A CLEAR MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT AND IS NOT CAMPAIGNING FOR THE COALITION-MINDED VOTER. HE DENIED THE CHARGE THAT CONSERVATIVES COULD NOT WORK WITH TRADE UNIONS, CITING PARTICULARLY THE PARTY'S SUCCESS 1970-74 IN COOPERATIVE EFFORTS WITH UNIONS TO INCREASE SALARIED INCOME OF LOWER-PAID WORKERS. HE SAID HE CONSIDERED CHALFONT'S DEPARTURE

FROM THE LABOR RANKS WAS ONLY AN INDICATION OF THE STRONG DIVISIONS WITHIN THAT PARTY. HE DUCKED QUESTIONS AGAIN AS TO WHAT SPECIFIC POLICIES A CONSERVATIVE MAJORITY PARTY WOULD ADOPT TO SOLVE INFLATION, SAYING THAT THE PARTY WAS AGREED THAT ALL, REPEAT ALL, MEASURES MIGHT HAVE TO BE UTILIZED. QUESTIONED ABOUT ANOTHER JOSEPH STATEMENT ON UNEMPLOYMENT, MR HEATH AGREED THAT UNEMPLOYMENT MIGHT WELL RISE IN THE EVENT OF A TORY VICTORY AT THE POLLS BECAUSE OF THE TIME REQUIRED FOR NEW POLICIES TO BECOME EFFECTIVE. HE FURTHERMORE REFUSED TO GIVE SPECIFIC NAMES OF THOSE OUTSIDE THE PARTY WHO MIGHT WORK WITH THE PARTY AFTER THE ELECTION AND GAVE NO DESCRIPTION OF WHAT KIND OF INSTITUTIONAL FRAME-WORK SUCH OUTSIDERS MIGHT OPERATE WITHIN. IN ANSWER TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION ABOUT POSSIBLE REFERENDUM ON BRITAIN'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMON MARKET, HEATH SAID THAT A REFERENDUM WAS A MATTER FOR PARLIAMENTARY DECISION AND NOTED THAT THE CONSERVATIVES HAD WON AN EARLIER PARLIAMENTARY VOTE ON THE COMMON MARKET BY 112.

3. AT THE LIBERAL CONFERENCE, MR THORPE WELCOMED THE CHALFONT SECESSION, INDICATED HE WOULD BE "WELCOMED" BY THE LIBERALS, AND BROADLY SUGGESTED CHALFONT MIGHT BECOME LIBERAL WHIP IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS. THORPE RESISTED THE OPPORTUNITY OF FORECASTING THE NUMBER OF SEATS THE LIBERALS WILL WIN AND CAME UNDER HEAVY QUESTIONING ON THE PARTY'S PLAN TO ATTACK INFLATION THROUGH A TAXATION POLICY.

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